

# Notes for teachers - please read before starting the lesson

**This lesson has been designed by drug education charity the DSM Foundation in response to concerns about increases in ketamine use and harms among young people. Before delivering this lesson, please watch the recorded staff briefing in slide 3.**

**There are topics included – particularly for older year groups – which some students or staff may find difficult** due to personal experiences. Please take a few minutes to go through the content carefully, making adjustments or preparations to avoid causing trauma or concern to any individuals, and ensure that it is made clear that support is available as needed.

**In order for the session to be effective, it must be provided in a safe and supportive learning environment** where students have the confidence to ask questions, challenge information they are offered, draw on their own experience, express their views and opinions and put what they have learned into practice in their own lives. For this reason, **there is a ground rules slide at the start of the session, and a takeaway task at the end.**

To make delivery of this session as easy as possible, there is a planning document to accompany this slide deck, which you may have been provided with. If not, don't worry: all the information in the planning document is also in the notes section of the relevant PowerPoint slide to make it as easy as possible for school staff to deliver the content effectively.

**Note: This plan can be spread over two sessions, using the video, reflection and sections in the first (possibly as a whole year assembly), and using the risk factors and shortened scenario activity in the second (ideally in form or tutor groups to facilitate peer learning).**

## **Objectives: by the end of this session students will be able to:**

- Communicate information about, and risks of, ketamine
- Identify strategies to avoid risks, reduce harm and make safer choices
- Access further information and support.

## **You will need:**

- Access to a laptop and smartboard with sound enabled
- Paper and pens for students.

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Lesson structure (total 50 minutes, which can be adjusted as necessary):		
Time	Slides	Task
15	3-8	Arrange class in small groups, introduce the objectives and ground rules; opening small group activity on what influences young people's decisions about alcohol. Feedback as whole group, then real world stats to illustrate how these can differ to perceptions.
5	10-11	Motivations and decision making – small group activity on why young people might drink.
10	12-13	How to reduce/prevent alcohol and drug use – whole group activity on ideas that might help, then small group activity on protective factors. Note: This requires the activity sheet linked to below so please ensure you have either been provided with or have printed enough for one per small group.
15	14-16	Discuss tips for resisting peer pressure in small groups, feedback, then compare to other suggestions using video as prompt for full group discussion on what might work best.
10	17-22	Reflect on key learnings, show video of Tatum Price talking about her son and his experience, signposting for further information and support, provide feedback.
<b>Before you finish the session:</b> There is a slide prompting for feedback at the end, which helps improve the provision. Please encourage students to do this using the QR code or URL when they do the last session for an academic year. Please also provide your (teacher) feedback on the DSM Foundation's resources by completing the survey at <a href="https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TZW2HVY">https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TZW2HVY</a>		
<b>To follow up and embed learning:</b> Revisit the takeaway task from the end of the session as part of an open discussion in a follow-on tutor or form time session – this helps students reflect on the knowledge and skills they have gained and put what they have learned into practice in their own lives.		

# Ketamine briefing for teachers only



**DANIEL  
SPARGO  
-MABBS  
foundation**

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**The drug education charity**



**DSM** foundation

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Supporting young people  
to make safer choices about drugs

# Ketamine - effects, risks and staying safe

**Respect confidentiality**

**Ask for help, support  
or advice if needed**

**Listen to others...**  
**...with respect**  
**...without judgement**  
**...or making assumptions**



Ground  
rules

**Ask questions**

**Be truthful, but  
use right to pass  
if needed**



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SPARGO  
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# Ketamine - what do you think?

**What do you think about the content of the video?**

**Did anything surprise you?**

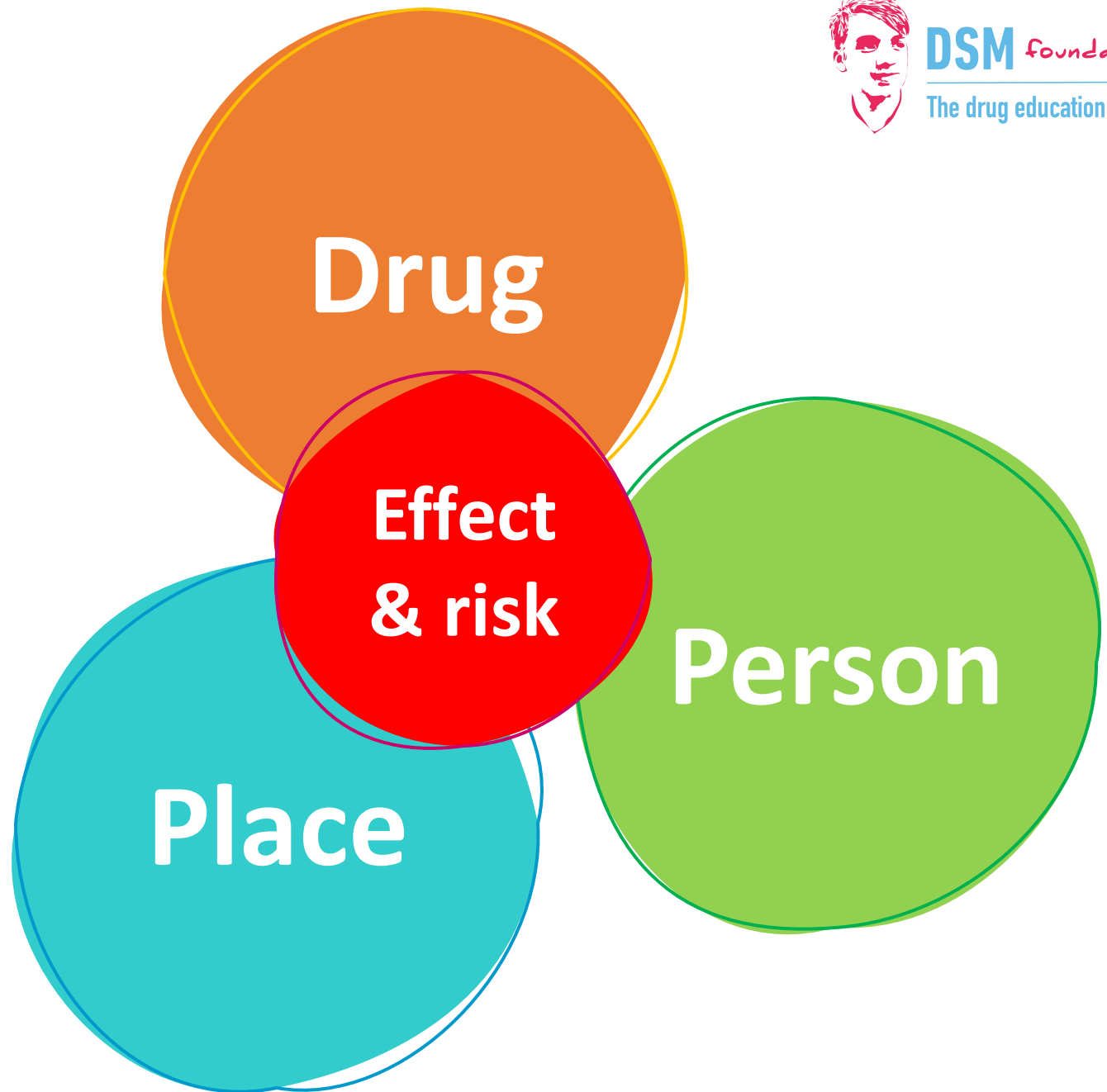
**Is there anything you want to know more about?**



# What can affect the risks?

The effects and risks of ketamine can vary depending on many different factors.

Remembering some of the points raised in the video, what variable factors could affect the risks across these three dimensions?



# Risk factors: the drug



- What drug has been taken? Stimulant, sedative, hallucinogen, dissociative?
  - Has the user mixed with other drugs, including alcohol or medication?
  - How strong is the drug? What else is mixed in? (How can you know?)
- 
- How has the drug been taken - swallowed, snorted, injected?



# Risk factors: the drug

The contents of illegal drugs are always unpredictable due to the way they're produced and the changes made to them along the supply route.

Drug checking organisations – such as The Loop – exist because this is the only way someone can know exactly what's in an illegal drug, and they put out alerts like this.

## DRUG ALERT: Ketamine Contaminated with Medetomidine

Recent tests in the North West have found medetomidine, a very strong veterinary sedative, mixed into ketamine. It cannot be spotted by sight, taste, or texture.

### This mix can cause:

- Extreme, long-lasting sedation
- Slow or shallow breathing
- Very slow heart rate
- Loss of consciousness
- Higher risk of overdose, accidents, assault, or robbery

Effects may come on quicker and feel heavier than usual.

- **Medetomidine** is a **potent sedative** used by vets on large animals.
- **Medetomidine** is similar to **Xylazine** but 200 times more potent and longer lasting.
- The **combination** of **Ketamine** and **Medetomidine** is likely to result in extreme **prolonged sedation** and **could be fatal**.
- The **combination** of **Ketamine** and **Medetomidine** may also leave you **extremely vulnerable** and at risk of sexual assault or robbery.

### Look after your mates

If possible, use with your mates. Using alone is much more risky because there is no one to look out for you if you overdose.

### Call an ambulance

If you suspect an overdose, call 999 immediately and ask for an ambulance.

Signs include unconsciousness, light shallow breathing, snoring/gurgling sounds and blue/pale lips/fingertips.

### Naloxone: get it, carry it, use it

- Act fast during an overdose, every second counts
- Call 999 straight away
- Check they are breathing
- Put them in the recovery position
- Give naloxone as soon as you can



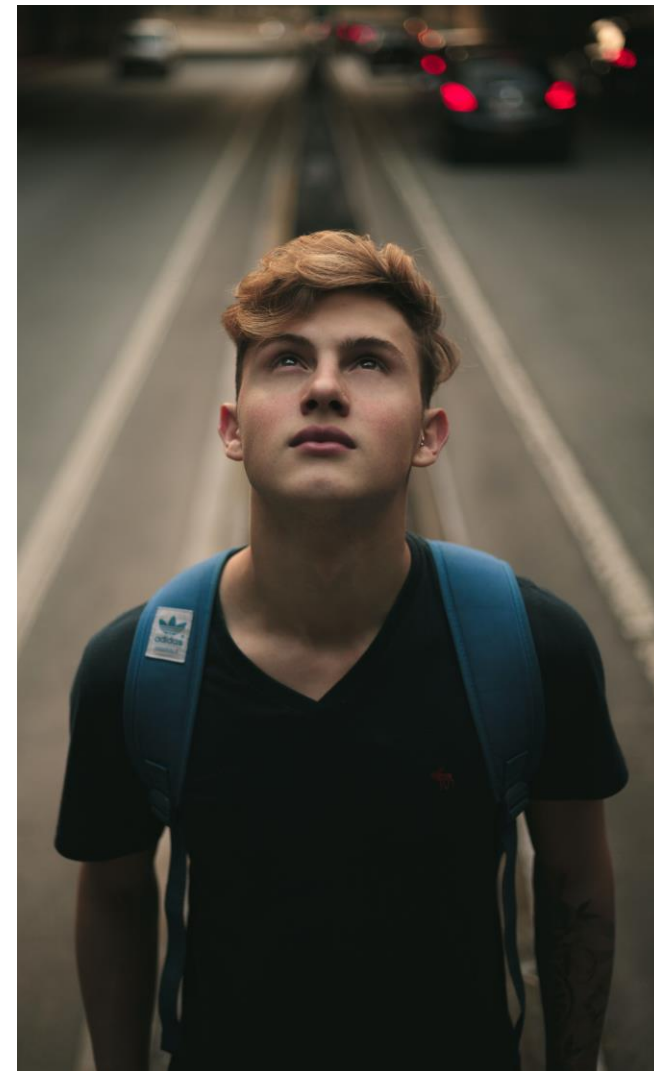
For free, confidential and non-judgemental support and advice, contact Wirral Ways.



# Risk factors: the person

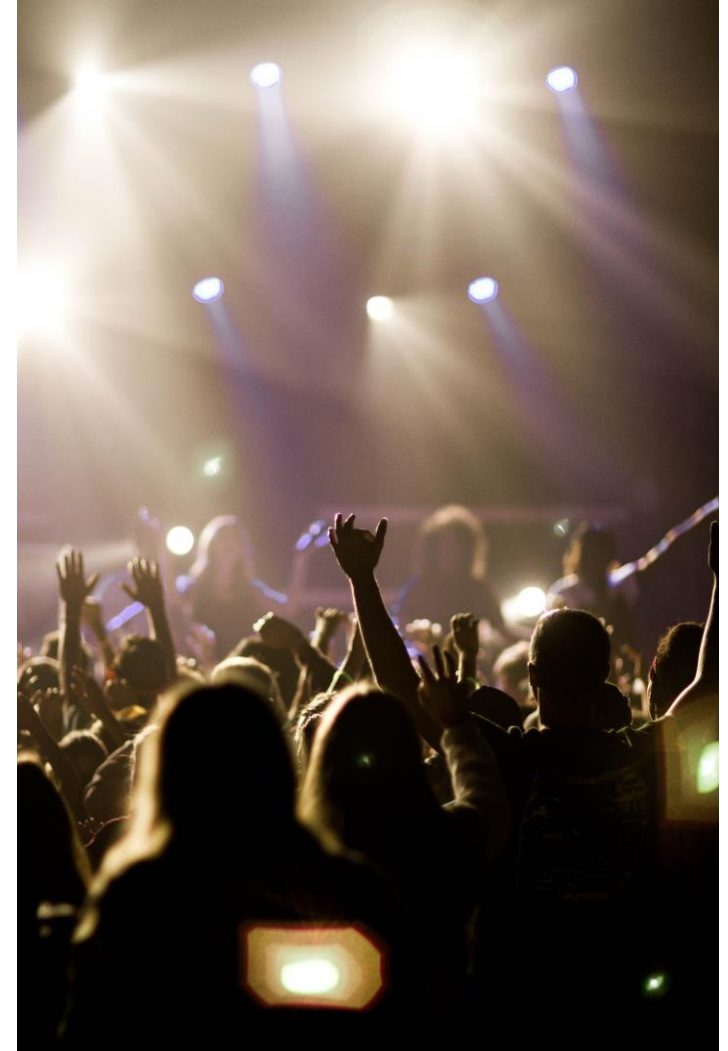


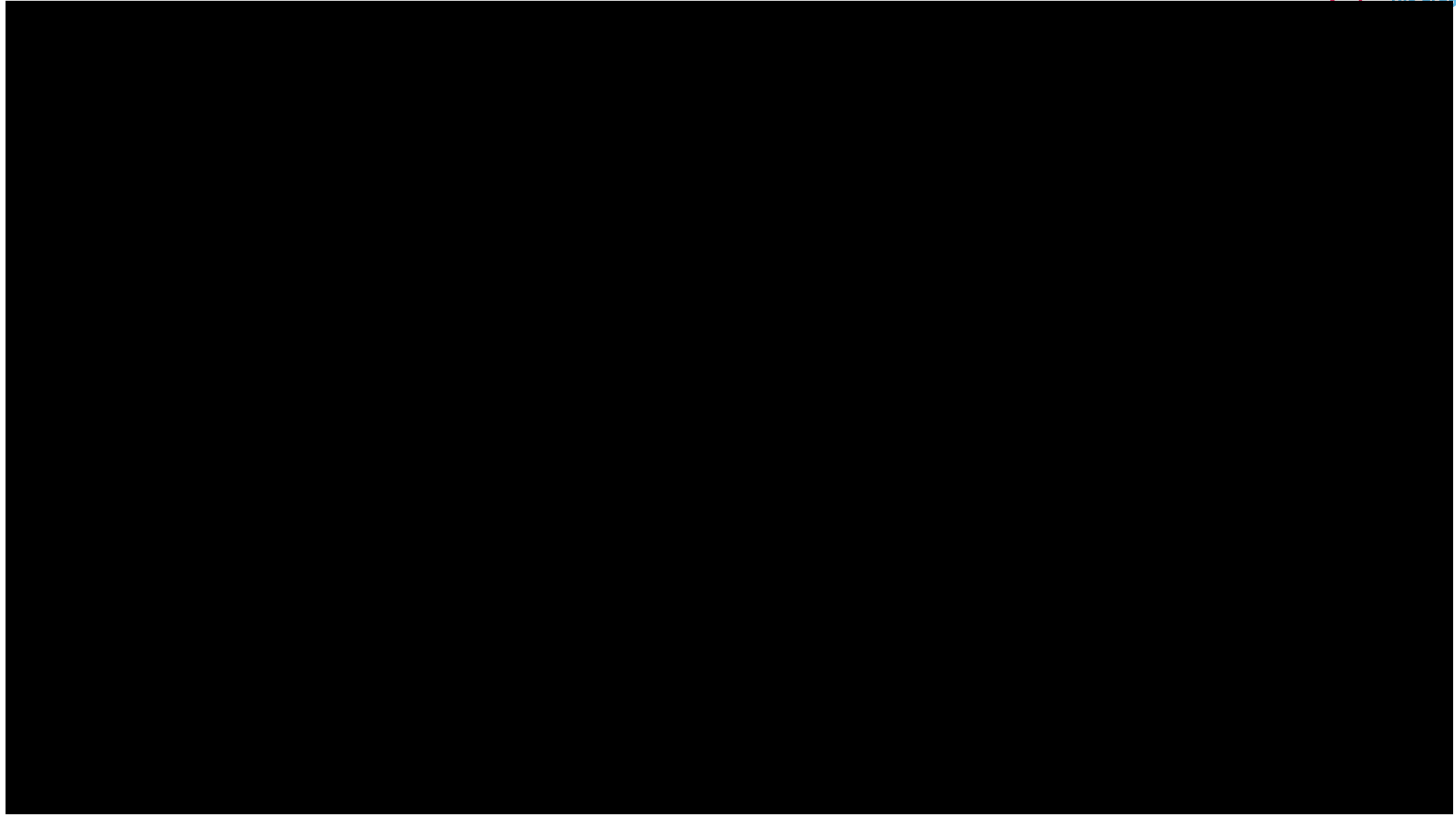
- Genetic makeup
- Family history
- Biological sex
- Metabolism
- Body mass
- Allergies
- Current physical health
- Current mental health
- Mood
- Expectations
- Tolerance



# Risk factors: the place

- Who is the person with? Is someone trusted looking out for them?
- Are they alone? (What if something goes wrong?)
- What is the place they are in like? Hot, cold, crowded, scary?
- What are the people around them like? What are they doing? What's the 'vibe'?
- Are they at risk of having an accident, or at risk of other potential harms, or of causing harm to themselves or someone else?





Supporting young people to make safe choices about drugs

# Making safer choices

Sal is going to a party tomorrow with a friendship group who tend to like to use ketamine. It's something Sal has tried a couple of times, but some of the friendship group are taking a lot more now than they used to.

Sal doesn't feel comfortable, but doesn't want to miss out on seeing friends or start getting left out of parties.

**What would your advice be to Sal?**



# Staying safe

## If you're with a friend who is taking drugs, talk to them about...

- **Knowing stuff** – make sure they know lots about anything they're taking, including harm reduction measures.
- **Staying together** – look out for each other.
- **Checking in regularly** – friends are best placed to spot signs of something going wrong.
- **Mixing is always dangerous** – that includes with alcohol or medicines.
- **Starting low, going slow**...anyone taking illegal drugs is taking something unpredictable in its contents, strength, purity...
- **Remembering the variable factors affecting risk** – the drug, the person, the place.
- **Thinking through the potential consequences.**
- **Being in a good space**, mentally as well as the physical environment.
- **Having (or being) a sober friend close by.**

**Know basic first aid, and call 999 if you think someone needs help – you WON'T get into trouble!**



# What do you think?

What % of 16-24 year olds had taken ketamine in the last year?

- a) 25%
- b) 10%
- c) 2%

**Only 2% had taken ketamine – most young people hadn't.**

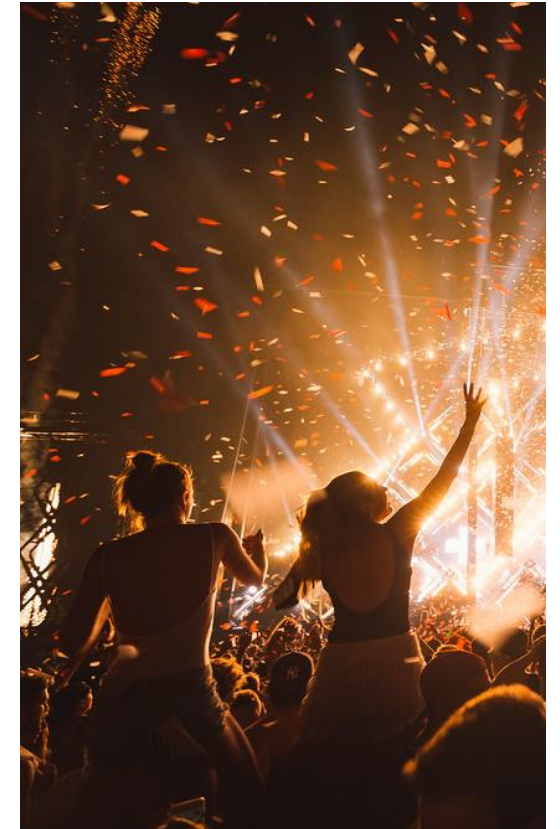
*Source: ons.gov.uk 2025*



**Remember – the only way to eliminate the risks posed by ketamine is to not use it...  
... and most people don't.**

# To take away...

- **Drugs pose risks in many different ways because there are so many variables involved.**
- **Specific risks relating to ketamine include how dangerous it is when mixed (including with alcohol), and vulnerability to injury/assault.**
- **The only way to eliminate drug-related risks is to not take them (and most people don't), but for those who do, having a sensible friend on hand is a good plan.**
- **If someone needs medical help, there should be no hesitation in calling 999.**



# Information for you

Find out more about ketamine at  
<https://www.knowthescore.info/drug/ketamine/>



Discover more about the risks of prolonged use of ketamine at <https://talktofrank.com/news/ketamine>

Harm reduction advice relating to ketamine can be found at <https://www.crew.scot/drug/ketamine/>

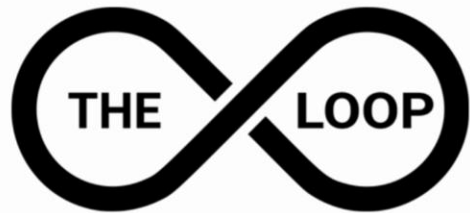


The drug education charity

More useful information, advice and links can be found at <https://www.dsmfoundation.org.uk/youngpeople/>

# Support for you

For tips on talking to a friend, check out  
<https://www.changegrowlive.org/advice-info/family-friends>



For drug alerts and drug first aid advice, head to  
<https://www.wearetheloop.org/>

For mental health advice and support, visit  
<https://www.youngminds.org.uk>

**YOUNG Mi MINDS**



To find local drug support services, go to  
<https://www.talktofrank.com/get-help/find-support-near-you>

**TAKE AWAY**

**What has been the most useful thing from this lesson? Who will you share it with?**

# Making Safer Choices

Please let us know how you found this resource by answering a few quick questions.

Scan this QR code or go to

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/T6RMGJK>

Your feedback is anonymous so you can be totally honest.

